

# LINCOLN IN PORTRAIT, PRINT, AND STATUARY



# A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Few historical figures have captivated photographers, print makers, artists, and sculptors as has Abraham Lincoln. Since 1846, when congressman-elect Lincoln posed for his earliest known photograph, a daguerreotype, Lincoln's image has been captured in innumerable poses and in various media. In comparison with other famous statesmen, Lincoln has attracted an amazingly large number of artists and sculptors. Undoubtedly two factors—the manner of the Martyred President's death and his legacy of sectional reconciliation and racial equality—have evoked the great fascination with Lincoln. The popularity of Lincoln in portrait, print, and statuary has made the Lincoln caricature a genre unto itself.

There is a certain mystique in the Sixteenth President that has caused artists to dedicate their lives to capturing his perfect likeness. Perhaps it is the homely quality of which Lincoln spoke when describing himself. Certainly, portrait artists have focused most often on the irregular features of Lincoln's face. Writing in 1963, Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf—two of the foremost authorities in the field of Lincoln photography—described the unique qualities of Lincoln's visage.

There was an uncommon virility in his looks. Early photographs show a face toughened by frontier life, hard as a hickory knot. Its sheer, rugged power is appealing; but taken one by one, the features are unattractive. His hair is coarse and unkempt and his big ears stand out from behind high cheek-bones. His eyelids droop, the right lower than the left, at times giving him an appearance of cunning. . . . Yet this face is an anomaly. Under the heavy eyelids is an alert glint with just a touch of humor. His eyes are at the same time cold and warm, penetrating and dreamy. . . . It is a wonderful face—a good face to look at and to study, for it has just enough mystery so that you can almost, but not quite, touch the man behind it!

In the years since Lincoln's death many an artist has been puzzled by Lincoln's personal appearance. Whereas some portray him as the plain, rugged woodsman of the Indiana frontier, others have pictured Lincoln as the war-wearied Chief Executive in Washington. Most often Lincoln is depicted as a lank, awkward figure with a sallow complexion. His bony frame—long arms and legs, long wiry neck, and narrow chest—frequently are accented by Lincoln artists. Cavernous sockets beneath his high forehead add to the detail and depth of his striking face. According to John G. Nicolay, the President's personal secretary, "the question of looks depended in Lincoln's case very much upon his moods."

The large framework of his features was greatly modified by the emotions which controlled them. The most delicate touch of the painter often wholly changes the expression of a portrait; his inability to find that one needed master touch causes the ever-recurring wreck of an artist's fondest hopes. In a countenance of strong lines and rugged masses like Lincoln's, the lift of an eyebrow, the curve of a lip, the flash of an eye, the movements of prominent muscles created a much wider facial play than in rounded immobile countenances. Lincoln's features were the despair of every artist who undertook his portrait.

Despite these difficulties, the magnetism of Lincoln's character has drawn countless portrait artists, lithographers, engravers, etchers, and sculptors. The field of



Lincoln art work is immense. It includes portraits (bearded and beardless), the Lincoln family, ensembles of Lincoln with political associates, and group pictures associated with the assassination, death, and funeral of the Sixteenth President.

Lincoln first became the delight of print makers (lithographers, engravers, and etchers) after the Republican National Convention of 1860. Advanced for his day in understanding the value of campaign publicity, Lincoln agreed to pose for numerous artists. Although often inaccurate as portraiture and inferior as art, print portraits of Lincoln served the Railsplitter well. In addition to creating an "image" for him in both the 1860 and 1864 Presidential campaigns they aided him in maintaining popular support during the Civil War. Following his assassination, prints worked to dramatize Lincoln as a martyr. According to print collector Harold Holzer, nineteenth-century prints of Lincoln "were images . . . as his admirers visualized him: not so much as he was, but as they wanted to see him." So great was the demand for views of Lincoln that some print makers resorted to what Holzer has termed "lithographic fudgery"—grafted images of Lincoln's face atop the body of other famous statesmen. Joining these "composite" prints are apotheosis scenes of Lincoln's rise into heaven. Poster prints and newspaper cartoons were the most numerous caricatures of the Sixteenth President.

Not far behind, however, are photographs, paintings, and sculptured works. Between 1857 and 1865 one hundred and twenty photographs of Lincoln were made. Many of these were taken in the studios of Alexander Hesler of Chicago, Samuel G. Alschuler of Urbana, Illinois, and Mathew B. Brady and Alexander Gardner in New York and Washington. According to photo-historian Frederick Hill Meserve, Lincoln "was perhaps the most photographed American of his time." With photographs and engravings to work from as models, many painters soon placed the lanky figure of the six-foot-four-inch President onto canvas. The earliest paintings of Lincoln were undertaken during the summer and fall of 1860 when fifteen or twenty artists traveled to Springfield to paint the Presidential candidate. Much of the work of the early artists was rendered obsolete, however, when the heretofore clean-shaven Lincoln began to grow his beard. Late in 1860, Jesse Atwood—a Pennsylvania artist—traveled to Springfield to put the first bearded portrait of the Railsplitter on canvas.

The worldwide attraction to Lincoln statuary has rendered the number of statues, statuettes, busts, and masks uncountable. Sculptors have special difficulties in capturing Lincoln's striking features because Lincoln seldom posed for sculptors of his own day. In spite of his unusual dimensions, resourceful chisellers have not shied away from the opportunity to cast Lincoln in plaster, bronze, marble, granite, and limestone. Lincoln statues appear in varying sizes—miniature, heroic, and colossal—and depict him as boy and man, bearded and beardless, and as Railsplitter, orator, and emancipator.

Whether standing, seated, kneeling, or addressing juries, Lincoln's strength of character takes on an added dimension when crafted in stone or cast in bronze.

Complex in life, Lincoln seems even more so in death. And the complexity of the man is best summarized in the various caricatures of him. Both in physical stature and in fame Lincoln is imposing. If many of his contemporaries misjudged him it was in part because he was an enigma—powerful yet sensitive, bucolic yet dignified. Lincoln had a spiritual quality that has inspired an outpouring of works of art. Perhaps John G. Nicolay was correct when in 1891 he wrote: "There are many pictures of Lincoln; there is no portrait of him."

The art work pictured and described in the remainder of this pamphlet is representative of the many forms in which Lincoln portraiture has appeared. Selected from among the holdings of The Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum, it suggests the vast richness of art devoted to the Sixteenth President. A select bibliography appears at the conclusion of the text. It is to serve as a guide for further reading and study by persons interested in the visual dimension of the Lincoln theme.

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In 1937 Dean Cornwell was commissioned by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company to paint "Lincoln Proclaiming Thanksgiving." This richly textured oil painting portrays Lincoln, spectacles in hand, immediately after he had signed the first annual Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1863. That year was "the high water mark" of the Civil War and Lincoln and the Union had much to be thankful for—the Emancipation Proclamation and victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Whereas previous chief executives had issued proclamations of thanksgiving and prayer, Lincoln established the precedent for holding Thanksgiving annually on the last Thursday in November. Cornwell was born in Kentucky in 1892 and earned the reputation as one of America's leading mural painters and illustrators. Among his better known works are the panels in the main rotunda of the Los Angeles Public Library depicting the pageant of California's history. The effective use of pastel colors in "Lincoln Proclaiming Thanksgiving" adds to the overall simplicity and warmth of the piece.





*Currier and Ives was undoubtedly the most prolific and popular firm of print makers in the nineteenth century. The Company was founded by Nathaniel Currier in 1835. He issued his first broadsheet lithograph in the Presidential campaign of 1848. In 1852 Currier was joined by his brother-in-law, James Ives. The company became a partnership five years later. Currier and Ives lithographs covered every phase of American history and life and their output was greater than that of all other firms combined. Pioneers of their craft, Currier and Ives perfected the lithographic process by which the drawing was done entirely by hand.*

*Altogether Currier and Ives published thirty-eight different prints of Lincoln. Ten were beardless, twenty-one were bearded, and seven were family portraits. Most of the Currier and Ives prints of Lincoln were drawn by Louis Maurer, a German native who emigrated to the United States in 1850. The sureness of detail which*





characterized Maurer's prints is evident in the two Currier and Ives lithographs pictured here. Both vignettes were modeled after Mathew Brady photographs and carry Lincoln's facsimile signature. Caught unprepared when Lincoln was elected President in 1860, resourceful print makers altered their lithographic stones after Lincoln began to grow a beard. Sometimes, as in the case of the bearded Lincoln shown here, the results were affected and inaccurate. Nevertheless, Currier and Ives formed a noteworthy partnership and one which helped popularize Lincoln both in life and after his death.





David Bustill Bowser's oil painting of Lincoln was completed in 1865 or 1866. Modeled after a photograph, the portrait was commissioned by the famed financier Jay Cooke of Philadelphia. For many years the portrait hung at Cooke's estate on Gibraltar Island which guards Put-in-Bay Harbor, Lake Erie. The Lincoln Library and Museum acquired the painting in 1932. Bowser was one of the leading American black artists of Lincoln's day. Born in Pennsylvania in 1820, his father had served as a baker for the Continental Army. Early in his career Bowser designed emblems for fraternal organizations. But he soon rose to prominence among painters when, after 1850, the New York HERALD took note of his talents. Praising works which he had exhibited in Philadelphia, the HERALD found "The marine paintings of Bowser . . . excellent." Before his death in 1920 Bowser painted at least one other portrait of Lincoln. This is located in a home for the elderly in Philadelphia. Bowser's portrait pictured here is hung in its original frame.



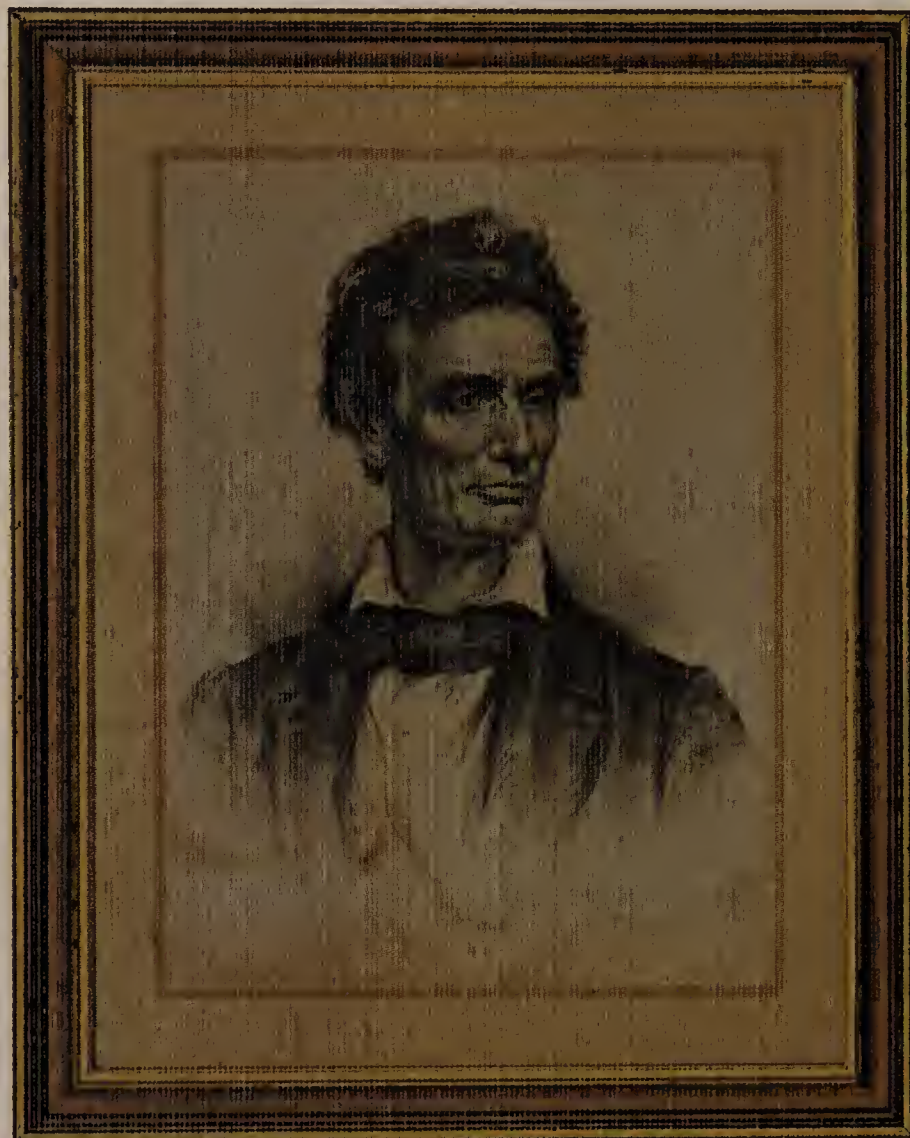


The Lincoln family never posed for an ensemble portrait. Consequently, painters and print makers have been forced to assemble the Lincolns in a group portrait as they might, rather than as they did, appear. And the end products frequently have been disappointing. Too often the family members are grouped out of context; they do not fit correctly into the artist's overall work. Frequently, too, the Lincolns are posed in an unreal, artificial setting. William Sartain's print of the Lincoln family is perhaps the best of its genre. A painter and engraver, Sartain was the third son of engraver John Sartain, under whom the boy studied drawing and engraving until he entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1867. Sartain produced "Lincoln and His Family" in 1866 after a painting by S. B. Waugh. Published by Bradley and Company, Philadelphia, this print offers a realistic portrayal of the Lincolns. Seated presumably in the White House are the President, Mary Todd Lincoln, and sons Robert and Thomas "Tad." Sartain included such details as a framed portrait of the Lincolns' deceased son William, reflected images from a mirror, and a fire screen used to protect ladies from the direct heat of the fireplace. The careful observer will note the Capitol Dome visible through the window on the extreme left and Jean A. Houdon's bust of George Washington on a pedestal in the background.





Because of its “Byronic” character, collectors have labeled this famous print “The Greek God.” The original crayon drawing was done by Charles Alfred Barry, a Massachusetts artist, who traveled to Springfield in July, 1860, to capture Lincoln’s likeness. Unfortunately, the original crayon sketch is missing today. Although some have criticized the portrait as too romanticized, many critics have heaped praise upon it. Commenting on Barry’s portrait in 1860, the Boston TRANSCRIPT welcomed it because “There is none of the smooth, bland, political office-seeker look about the face of the fearless Illinois backwoodsman . . . His is not the head to bow to an ‘Imperious master.’” Obviously endorsing Lincoln’s candidacy for the presidency, the TRANSCRIPT added that Barry’s portrait contained qualities which suggested Andrew Jackson’s “firmness,” a certain rural geniality, and “a readiness of adaptation to any circumstance, even though that circumstance be the Presidential Chair.” Later in 1860 Boston lithographer J. H. Bufford published Barry’s drawing in a larger-than-life size. The engraver—J. E. Baker—softened the tone of the Barry drawing. The ruffled hair and youthful features convey a sentimentalized and stylized image of the fifty-one-year-old Illinois Railsplitter.





This bust-length print was modeled after Thomas Hicks' 1860 painting—the first of the beardless portraits of Lincoln. A Pennsylvanian, Hicks had impeccable credentials. He had attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Design in New York, and in Europe at the National Gallery in London as well as galleries in Paris and Rome. So impressed was Lincoln with the Hicks portrait that he wrote: “It will give the people of the East a correct idea of how I look at home, and, in fact, how I look in my office. I think the picture has a somewhat pleasanter expression than I usually have, but, that perhaps is not an objection.” J. H. Buford—who published Barry's portrait—also published Hicks'. The stone was prepared by L. Grozelier of Boston. Because the portrait makes Lincoln appear so young, collectors have named it “The Youthful Lincoln.” The print in the possession of the Library and Museum was once the property of Henry Watterson, the fiery editor of the Louisville COURIER-JOURNAL. After changing hands several times, the original portrait was finally bequeathed to the Chicago Historical Society.





Print collectors generally agree that the life-size head-and-shoulder portraits by William E. Marshall and John H. Littlefield rank among the finest line-engravings of Lincoln. Both show Lincoln with full beard, facing and looking slightly to the left. Experts disagree over which print is superior.

Marshall was born in 1837 in New York and established himself as an accomplished engraver of bank notes. He gained notoriety, however, after moving to Boston where he opened a portrait studio. As his reputation grew Marshall's patrons came to include Emerson, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. At the time of Lincoln's assassination, Marshall was in France exhibiting his works. Upon learning of Lincoln's death, he returned to the United States to begin work on a painting of the Martyred President. So highly acclaimed was Marshall's painting that in 1866 Ticknor and Fields of Boston contracted with the artist to publish his line-engraving of Lincoln by subscription. So impressed was the ATLANTIC MONTHLY that in 1866 it commented: "Were all the biographies and estimates of the President's character to be lost, . . . from this picture alone, the distinguishing qualities of his head and heart might be saved to the knowledge of the future." The Marshall engraving became one of the most popular of all Lincoln prints and copies of it number in the thousands. The Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library



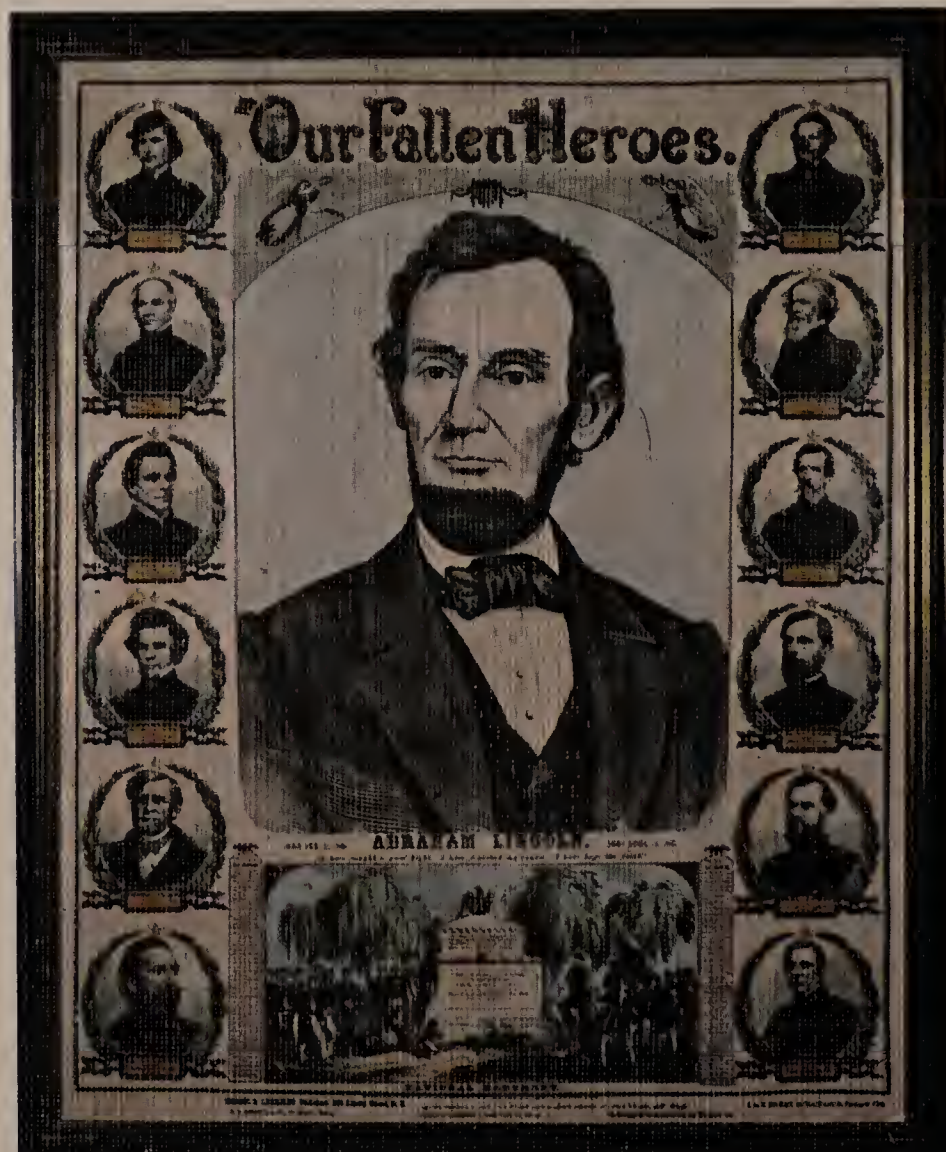


and Museum owns the original steel plate on which the engraving was made.

Only slightly less famous than the Marshall engraving is the portrait of Lincoln by Littlefield. A native of Cicero, New York, Littlefield revealed an artistic temperament early in life but decided instead to become a lawyer. Ironically, it was as a law student in the office of Lincoln and Herndon that Littlefield served his apprenticeship. Although he eventually decided against law in favor of a career as a painter, Littlefield campaigned for Lincoln in 1860 and was rewarded by the President with a job in the Treasury Department. The assassination of Lincoln in 1865 moved Littlefield to paint a death-bed scene—including twenty characters—which became one of the best known portrayals of Lincoln's death. Shortly afterward Littlefield painted his most famous work—the oil portrait of Lincoln—which was probably copied from a Brady photograph and rendered more accurate by Littlefield's recollections of his famous friend. The painting was engraved by German-born Henry Gugler who spent two years fashioning the 20-by-23-inch steel plate. Upon its completion in 1869, the Littlefield engraving joined Marshall's portrait as one of the two best likenesses of Lincoln. The lasting appeal of these engravings results from the painstaking, detailed efforts of the artists and engravers.

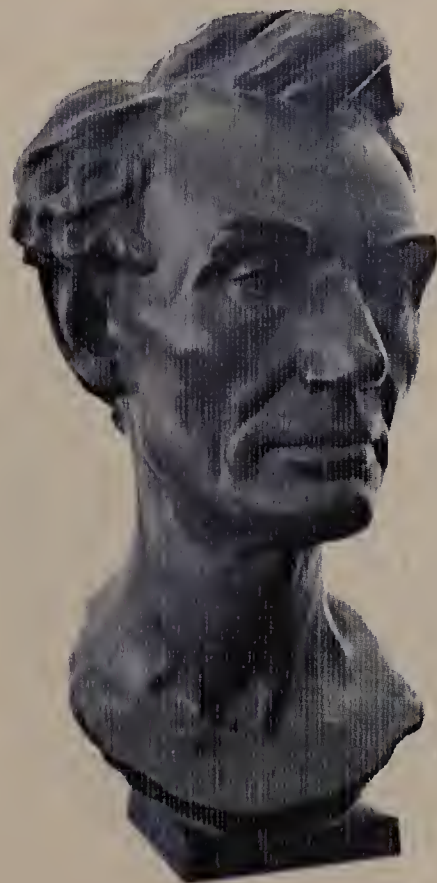


The colored lithographic poster, "Our Fallen Heroes," was published in 1865, following Lincoln's death, by the New York firm Haasis and Lubrecht. Measuring 35 by 28 inches, the print was based on a photograph taken by Anthony Berger in Brady's Washington gallery in February, 1864. The poster includes the President's name, birth and death dates, and the statement: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." Because of the striking detail it presents of Lincoln's head, this photograph inspired many paintings and lithographs. According to Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, it pictured Lincoln "with just a faint suggestion of merriment in his sparkling eyes, as though a smile were about to ignite his masklike features." Colored lithographs like the one reproduced here gained in popularity during the 1840s and 1850s. In the earliest colored lithographs, colors were applied between the black lithographed outlines. Stencils and wood blocks were sometimes used for filling in areas of flat color. Later, with the development of chromolithography, separate lithographic stones were used to print the picture entirely in color without the black outlines of the older lithographic technique.

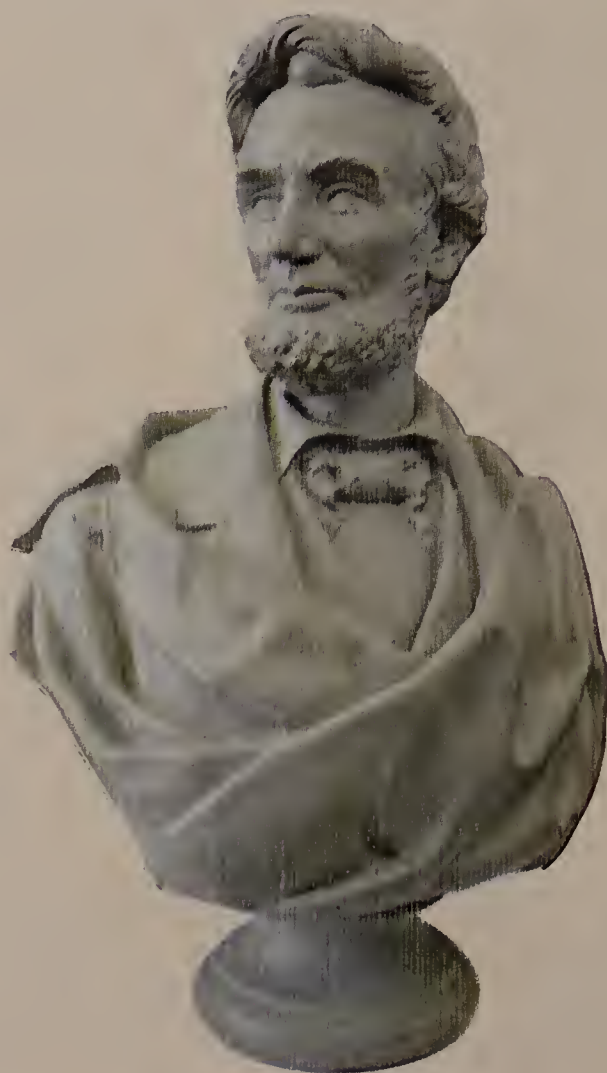




The “short” bronze bust of Lincoln was completed by sculptor Leonard Wells Volk in June, 1860. Volk was born in Wellstown, New York, in 1828. Trained in the art of modeling by the trial-and-error method, he established studios in Buffalo, St. Louis, Galena, Illinois, and most notably, in Chicago. Ironically, it was Stephen A. Douglas—Lincoln’s arch political adversary in Illinois—who provided funds for Volk to study art in Rome. The “Little Giant” was Volk’s cousin-by-marriage and in 1859 the young sculptor repaid Douglas by casting a statuette of him. Revealing remarkable prescience, in 1858 Volk asked Lincoln to sit for a bust portrait. Two years later, in April, 1860—weeks before the Railsplitter’s Presidential nomination—Lincoln came to Volk’s studio and posed for a life mask. Volk thus has the distinction of being the first sculptor for whom Lincoln is known to have posed. The day after Lincoln received formal notice of his nomination Volk traveled to Springfield to make molds of Lincoln’s hands. Volk cast a number of images of Lincoln including the “short” bust pictured here, the nude or “Hermes” bust, the full or “draped” bust, and the heroic statue in the Statehouse at Springfield. The “short” bust is the most popular of Volk’s works and replicas of it have been manufactured widely. Many prefer it to the larger “Hermes,” which, according to critics, emphasizes Lincoln’s shoulders and chest out of proportion. The Library and Museum owns Volk’s “short” bust in both plaster and bronze.



Born in Oneida County, New York, in 1811, Thomas Dow Jones labored as a tanner, stone cutter, and teacher until the 1840s when he moved to Cincinnati. While residing in the Queen City, Jones became a successful sculptor—modeling busts of such notables as Henry Clay, Zachary Taylor, Lewis Cass, Winfield Scott, and John C. Breckinridge. Prominent Cincinnati Republicans commissioned Jones to sculpt a bust of President-elect Lincoln in 1860. In doing so, Jones joined Volk as one of only eight sculptors for whom Lincoln ever sat. Lincoln posed over a span of a month and one-half beginning late in December, 1860. The two men met almost every morning in Jones' studio on the fourth floor of Springfield's St. Nicholas Hotel. This arrangement afforded Jones a rare opportunity—to observe Lincoln over a long period of time in an intimate, relaxed mood. The plaster bust was completed by July, 1861. Jones made very few casts of his Lincoln bust—fewer than twelve have been located. In 1864 Jones executed a second bust of Lincoln. Shortly before his assassination Lincoln recommended the sculptor for a position in the American consulate in Italy. Years later the State of Ohio engaged Jones to cut a heroic-size marble model of his famous 1861 bust for the Statehouse in Columbus. Jones' bust of Lincoln has been acclaimed as one of the finest ever produced. It endows Lincoln's face with a mobile quality rarely captured by camera or artist.





The Pickett profile of Lincoln was obtained by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in 1923 and became the first acquisition of the Lincoln Historical Research Foundation upon its establishment in 1928. The original plaque is an elliptical shaped slab of bronze 24-by-19-inches and one quarter inch thick. Lincoln's head—in bas-relief—measures 18-by-12-inches. Inscribed in the lower area of the plaque is the name "Pickett" with the date "1873." Little is known of sculptor Pickett. It is alleged that he was of French descent and was associated with Leonard Volk either in America or France. It is certain, however, that Pickett used C. S. German's profile portrait of Lincoln as his model. This little-known portrait depicts Lincoln with full beard and unkempt hair—features prominent in the Pickett plaque. In 1909—the centennial of Lincoln's birth—the government issued a commemorative two cent stamp and a one cent piece both which bore the Pickett profile of Lincoln. From 1911-1917 the profile was used on a one cent 3-by-5-inch postal card. George E. Roberts, Director of the United States Mint, praised Pickett's plaque as "the finest likeness of Lincoln that has yet appeared." So obscure has Pickett remained that the Chicago TRIBUNE was accurate when in 1910 it explained that "his name [would] live only through this work."

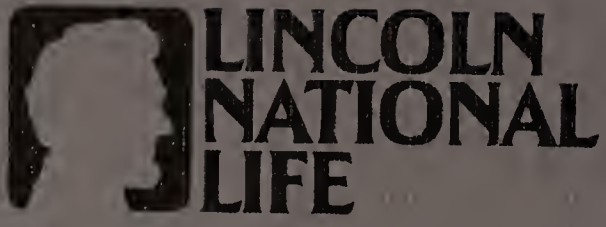


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